No. 652 Twopence February, 1958

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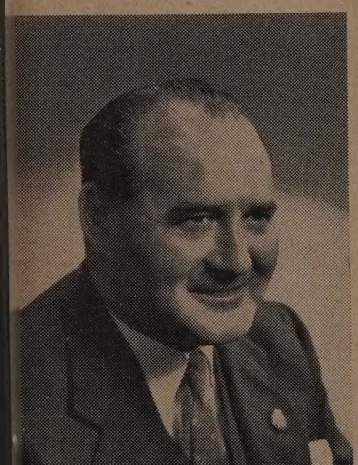
THE
UNITARIAN
A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS



THESE ARE UNITARIANS

2. George Lowthian, M.B.E.
By Arthur Peacock

Mr. George Lowthian, the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Operatives, Treasurer of the Social Service Department of the General Assembly and Chairman of Wandsworth Unitarian Church. is a Unitarian born and bred.

His maternal grandfather was one of the founders of the Unitarian cause in Carlisle and it was as a young Sunday School scholar that George Lowthian first came to the local Unitarian Church. Subsequently he was to help the church in many ways; as committee man, church trustee, and preacher on many occasions when there was no resident minister. His close family links with the cause in Carlisle occasion some sadness now that the church has had to close owing to lack of support.

Outside Unitarianism, Mr. Lowthian has given faithful service to the Temperance movement. As a boy he was a cadet in the Sons of Temperance. Other offices in the movement which he has held include those of District Chief Templar for North Cumberland and District Councillor for East and Mid-Surrey.

Apprenticed to brick-laying, Mr. Lowthian worked at the trade until his appointment as a trade union official. His first voluntary job for trade unionism began the week he came out of his apprenticeship—at the age of 22. He was elected Secretary of the local trade union branch. From then till now Mr. Lowthian has held trade union office continuously. His record shows 16 years as local branch secretary, 12 years as district official, five years national executive member, five years district organiser.

In 1951 George Lowthian came south to take up the important office of General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Operatives. The following year he was elected a member of the T.U.C. General Council. His many services to trade unionism found recognition in the 1949 honours list when the M.B.E. was conferred upon him.

Mr. Lowthian's office in the trade union movement occasions a good

deal of travelling both in this country and on the Continent. It involves, too, much skilful negotiation with building trade employers concerning wage rates and conditions in this important industry. But though his life is a very crowded one, George Lowthian is regular in church attendance when at home, presides over the affairs of the Wandsworth congregation, and brings to its deliberations the cheerful disposition, competence and understanding that have done so much to win a place for him in the front ranks of the Labour movement.

Young in years—his 50th birthday has only recently been celebrated—George Lowthian is likely to play a significant part in these three movements: Unitarian, Temperance and Trades Unionism, for many years to come.

At the forthcoming General Assembly meetings he will be addressing the Men's League and the Lay Preachers' Conference.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The ? ? on ice

"Brrrr!"—the sound came from Nippa. "I think we shall have some more snow very soon."

"We should have done better to stay at home," muttered Pippa, between bouts of hand-blowing. But Slippa sang cheerfully as they went along—he was a happy soul.

"We'd better try running for a while," said Nippa. "If I carry on at this pace I'll soon be frozen."

On this point the others agreed and all were about to break into a trot when a full-blooded cheer arose from somewhere close at hand. They soon tracked it to one of Farmer Merryweather's fields—the one with the big pond.

The pond was frozen and more than a score of people were on it, skating. The cheer was a greeting for — well, *surely* not! — it couldn't be! — but what was the *Mayor* doing out on a morning like this—chain and all?

As the Woodfolk crept closer the Mayor was making it clear that as the records showed that a properly-frozen pond hadn't been seen in the district for a long time, he had decided it was too good an opportunity to miss. So, here he was, skates at the ready. As he said, with no frozen ponds, how did one get any skating practice? He, himself (he said) was quite rusty.

He was. His first efforts showed that. They also showed an alarming tendency to grasp at anything or anyone within reach, so that every time the Mayor went down (and that was often), at least half-a-dozen others went down with him. After 10 or 15 minutes the Mayor was not in favour. He soon found himself somehow in a more isolated spot with nobody about upon whom he could hang. That was *one* reason why nobody was there. Another reason was apparent a minute or so later when a sharp crack was heard and the Mayor, with a loud cry, made an undignified exit through a large hole in the ice!

When the Mayor had gone home, wrapped in a huge blanket, Slippa, also homeward bound, sang:

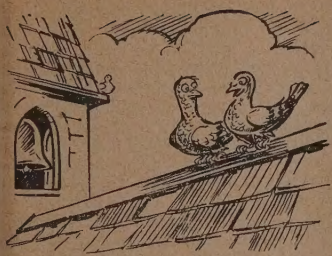
"Oh, February's a cold month,
And sometimes not so nice.
Our Mayor no doubt thought just the same,
As he went through the ice!"

CHURCH IN THE NEWS

From the Ilford Recorder

At the best of times Ilford High Road is rather uninspiring. In the present season of cold and fog it becomes downright dismal. One of the few pleasant things about it is the poster outside the Unitarian Church. The current one reads:

"With all the drudgery, sham and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world."



Since parson has been on ITV he keeps looking for a "natural break" in the service to introduce the announcements.

THE I.A.R.F.

By Dr. H. Faber.

(The last Sunday in February is International Sunday, when our churches are asked to remember the work of our International Association. The following article is slightly abbreviated from the account written by the senior secretary of the I.A.R.F. for the Newsletter of the National Unitarian Fellowship).

I.A.R.F. means "International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom." Its aim is:

"To bring into closer union the historic liberal churches, the liberal element in all churches, and isolated congregations and workers for religious freedom.

"To draw into the same fellowship free religious groups throughout the world which are in essential agreemen with our ways of thinking, and

"To open and maintain communications with free Christian groups in all lands who are striving to unite religion and liberty, and to increase fellowship and co-operation among them."

The Association has existed for about 60 years. Its cradle was in the U.S.A. It was born at a meeting organised by prominent American Unitarians at a time when liberal thought was celebrating triumphs in the political and economic field as well as other areas. Modernisation of theology and church, concern for the progress of modern culture, and liberation from backwardness were tremendous motives in the religious and ecclesiastical life of those days. It was an old tradition which had already asserted itself at the time of the Reformation, made headway in the 19th century, and had become influential in all sorts of ways—although some signs were already becoming visible of the ebb which was to affect the 20th century. Representatives of various churches in America and Europe decided to hold congresses regularly for the propagation and defence of liberal thought in the religious field. At first these international congresses also drew the interest of progressive representatives of non-Christian religions. The early meetings were sometimes attended by thousands of people from various countries and districts. Congresses were held in London (1901), Amsterdam (1903), Geneva (1905), Boston, U.S.A. (1907), Berlin (1910) and Paris (1913).

The First World War proved a scre trial for this kind of work. The halo around liberal thought and religion had faded, and even the idea of international brotherhood had suffered a setback, when, some years after the war, an attempt was made to revive the old relationships. The first congress after the war was held in Prague in 1927. The foundation of the Czechoslovak Church, which arose from a modernist movement in the Roman Catholic Church provided a challenge. Representatives from other countries, however, were not living with the same enthusiasm. Even in the non-Christian religions

the situation seemed to have changed radically. Liberal thinking people no longer exercised the influence they had had, and often did not appreciate close contact with other liberal people of Christian inheritance. Nevertheless, in 1930 a permanent organisation was instituted.

The associated groups decided on the establishment of an Association with an Executive Committee to meet at regular intervals, and with a permanent secretariat, with which Holland was entrusted, as the various liberal groups in Holland had a good tradition of co-operation and the Dutch were specially suited for international work by their geographical position and knowledge of languages. By the time of the Second World War the Association comprised churches and groups of various sizes in U.S.A. (two), Belgium, Czechoslovakia (two), Denmark, France, Germany (two), Great Britain (two), Hungary, India. Japan, Holland, Northern Ireland, Roumania, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland.

After the war the Dutch secretariat, whose personnel had survived the war, immediately resumed work. At a meeting in Cambridge in 1946 it appeared that the same groups would co-operate. After the first war there had been a certain hesitation with regard to the ideals of freedom, but now there was a conviction that only life from the inner depths could save and direct the world, and for the liberal-minded, their old tradition was part of those inner depths. Among the larger Christian churches the ecumenical movement had become much stronger, so that our Association now had to find its place in a world which was much more internationally-minded.

Since the war, congresses have been held every three years, at Amsterdam, Oxford and Belfast, and there is one on the programme for 1958 at Chicago. International contact is much better than ever before. Reports of each congress have been published. The quarterly "News-Digest" keeps a large number of readers all over the world posted about the work of the I.A.R.F. Individuals can become personal members for an annual subscription of 10s. including the "News-Digest."

For several years our churches behind the Iron Curtain, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Roumania (Transylania) have constituted a problem. In 1956 one of our secretaries made a trip to Hungary and Czechoslovakia, giving us a better picture of the situation and renewing old relationships. It now became possible to organise large-scale relief for our friends in Hungary, work in which many people in the rest of the world took part.

In conclusion we report current attempts to revive an old theme of our work—our relationship with other world religions. This had disappeared for a while from the horizon of many liberal people because of the world situation, but it represents an essential reality for us as world unity grows. It is good that America with its central position in world affairs invites us to consider problems facing East and West, problems for whose solution Liberal Christianity may make a contribution.

WHAT WE GIVE AWAY

Love that is hoarded moulds at last,
Until we know some day—
The only thing we ever have
Is what we give away.
And kindness that is never used
But hidden all alone
Will slowly harden till it is
As hard as any stone.
It is the things we always hold
That we shall lose some day;
The only things we ever keep
Are those we give away.

Anon

"REVERENCE FOR THE ETERNAL"

By A. B. Downing

The well-known verse in Psalm III about the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom is translated by Dr. Moffat: "The first thing in knowledge is reverence for the Eternal." How different are the ways in which men have thought about "that Power not ourselves," whose Mind and Providence lies behind the visible Universe! John Calvin, once wrote that no man can arrive at any true knowledge of himself without being first aware of the character of God; and God's character, according to Calvin, is something to be feared. He pointed out that a common expression among the ancient Jews, was "we shall die, because we have seen God."

The character of God is seen rather differently by such scientists as the late Sir Oliver Lodge, who believed that our sense of the Divine Being should generate not fear, but joy and love. God surely intended that the more complete our knowledge of the Universe, the more we should feel at home in it. Sir Oliver Lodge suggested that we can think about God as we think of the sun; the sun is the centre of the solar system, a glorious object full of mystery and unknown forces, but the sunshine itself is a friendly and homely thing, which shines in at a cottage window and touches common objects with radiance, bringing warmth and comfort even to the cat.

We Unitarians believe that we cannot expect everyone to see the Universe and our daily experience of the world in precisely the same light. What matters to us is that to think about God at all and really to try to come to terms with our own idea of Him, is to begin to see life differently, still mysterious but more complete. The thought of God may indeed fill some with pure fear. A few gifted and fortunate ones it may fill with a mystic sense of joy. To those who are religious in more ordinary and less dramatic terms, the thought of God brings a sense of reverence. For us indeed "the first thing in knowledge is reverence for the Eternal."

UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

Miss Agnes McLelland, of Cairncastle, won the Ladies' International Ploughing trophy at the Northern Ireland competition in November.

The Rev. R. W. Sorenson, minister of Walthamstow Unitarian Church and M.P. for Leyton, is to receive the Freedom of the Borough of Leyton in March. He is Chairman of the National Peace Council.

Miss Vera Gibbs, of Adelaide, Sister Midwifery Tutor under W.H.O. at Rangoon in Burma, and later at Bandung, Indonesia, has visited the Rev. Margaret Barr in the Khasi Hills on her way back to Australia.

Mrs. E. W. Cronin, who has been on the staff of Stand Sunday School for 27 years, has been appointed District Commissioner for Whitefield Girl Guides. She is the author of the Nativity Cradle Song printed in the December issue.

Mr. John Holt, of Stockport, now a student at Oxford in "lodgings" at Manchester College, has been beating records in the Freshmen's athletic events.

Mary O'Connor, a bedfast Unitarian poet, has been awarded the American Cup for outstanding services to poetry and poets of America.

Mary B. Byles, of Sydney Unitarian Church, has published "Footprints of Gautama the Buddha" (Rider, 16s.).

The Rev. W. B. Taverner, of Edinburgh, is going to Skene Street Church, Aberdeen, in March.

The Rev. John Storer has begun his ministry at the Church of the Divine Unity, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

NEWS AND VIEWS

OVERSEAS CHURCHES

The American *Christian Register*, founded in 1821, has now altered its title to *The Unitarian Register*, to avoid a misleading impression that the Unitarian Churches and Fellowships are exclusively for those who fully accept the primacy of the Christian religious tradition, and to identify the magazine more closely with the Unitarian denomination as an instrument of liberal religious thought.

SHADY GROVE Church, the bush church near ADELAIDE, has been presented with a new pulpit for its 92nd anniversary, by Mr. V. Dunstan, in memory of his wife, a granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. C. Smith, who gave the land and the church. Mr. Smith was for many years Lay Pastor of the church.

VANCOUVER. The average attendance at services has risen to 178, and arrangements are being made to increase the seating capacity.

IRISH CHURCHES

COMBER Church raised £440 at special collections for their repairs fund.

DROMORE Congregation raised £80 at a Hallowe'en tea and concert arranged by the ladies of the church.

CLOUGH has received £100 and RADEMON £150 in bequests from the late Mrs. Martha Jane Cleland.

GREAT BRITAIN

DITCHLING. A Service of Carols and Christmas readings was held on Christmas morning.

HINCKLEY. A second evening service conducted by the Young People was held very successfully on December 9th.

LEEDS. The alterations to the Priestley Hall are now complete, and the new kitchen produced an excellent supper for a November Social, with bacon, eggs, sausages and tomatoes, apple pie and coffee. The Saturday Shoppers' Teas have not been so well patronised as was hoped, but have raised £10 10s. 0d. by Christmas.

ILFORD. The Annual Bazaar raised over £90, and at the opening two Members of Parliament were on the platform: The Rev. R. W. Sorenson, M.P. for Leyton, and Mr. A. E. Cooper, M.P. for South Ilford. Mr. Sorenson referred to his recent visit to America with its full churches, and hoped to see Ilford in days to come as full as in former years. Mr. Cooper commended those who, in a materialistic age, were willing to work for a cause in which they believed.

MACCLESFIELD. The New Year's Eve Social has been revived, followed by a Watch-Night Service.

MANCHESTER. ALTRINCHAM carol singers joined other local Free Church choirs to lead community carol singing in the station approach at 8.30 p.m. on the Sunday before Christmas, and also sang in the old peoples' homes. The evening was so wet that they disbanded after the community singing. The next night they went out and collected £5 12s. OLDHAM members carried out a leaflet canvassing campaign in the autumn, with results that have yet to be estimated. The annual Sale of Work raised £367. There was a full chapel for the service for old people on December 8th.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEPARTMENT. An Inter-District Conference for Sunday School officers in the Liverpool, Manchester and North Cheshire areas was held on November 23rd at Gorton. Forty-four people representing 18 schools discussed in groups questions relating to "The Official and his School," "The Official and his District," and "The Official and his Movement," pooling their combined experience for the task of improving Sunday School work and organisation. Scribes presented group reports to

the general meeting, and a panel of observers, namely the Rev. Joyce Hazlehurst, Mr. Martin Grundy and Mr. Eric Caton, with the Rev. C. H. Bartlett as chairman, brought the Conference to a close. The Rev. Dudley Richards spoke briefly on the efficiency and administration of the school official, district official and his own department. An excellent tea was provided by Brookfield School.

STAND. The Gift Week-End and Novelty Fair raised £431. Plans have been made to celebrate the Sesquicentenary of the Sunday School (150 years) in 1958 with a pageant of school history and a special outing. A Christmas Eve Ball was well attended, and a New Year Party and Dance.

STOCKPORT. The Sale of Work realised approximately £200, and an anonymous donor has given £150 towards the cost of a new boiler, the balance of which, a little over £50, is to be met by special subscriptions. An experimental Sunday evening Social Hour after service is being held on the second Sunday in the month.

TODMORDEN has formed a Men's League which has elected its own committee and a socials committee.

WESTERN UNION NEWS. The children at Oakfield Road Church, CLIFTON, made a Christmas Crib, which was placed by the west door to greet worshippers on arrival. A Children's Chapel is to be made in the side aisle. The monthly Discussion Group has made a good start with meetings considering "A Liberal Religion for a Modern World." CREWKERNE has had the most successful Sale of Work yet recorded, with takings of over £57. The organ has been repaired and the wall behind it re-plastered. TROWBRIDGE celebrated the 100th anniversary of the opening of the present Conigre Chapel building on November 10th. SIDMOUTH Women's League made £36 for the hospital building fund at a Coffee morning.

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The report of a Unitarian Commission

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"Times Literary Supplement."

3/6 by post 3/10

The Unitarian Faith in Unitarian Hymns

This small collection of sixty hymns is "A small treasury of hymns truly expressive of the Unitarian faith in its various aspects." Biographical notes appear in alphabetical order at end of the book.

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The Story and Significance of the Unitarian Movement

by W. G. Tarrant, B.A.

Reprinted with additional notes

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The Lindsey Press, 15, Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

National Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Lay Preachers

Preliminary Notice

AN EASTER SCHOOL

will be held from Thursday, 3rd April to Tuesday, 8th April, at the Unitarian College, Manchester

Please Note: The School will be extended until Easter Tuesday this year for those wishing to stay

Programme from P. J. Spencer, 114, Beeches Road, West Bromwich, Staffs.

UNITARIAN BROADCAST

On Sunday, February 9th, the 9.45 a.m. service will be broadcast from Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, by the Rev. Brian L. Golland, M.A.

RECOMMENDED

A propaganda booklet

By an unfortunate oversight, the useful propaganda booklet with the title **"I'm Not Religious, But..."** which is by the Rev. Arthur Peacock, and was issued in time for the 1957 Assembly meetings, was not noticed in this magazine. Unitarians who have not seen it should look for it on their church bookstalls (price 6d.) or send to the Lindsey Press, 15, Gordon Square, W.C.1. The title comes from a conversation with a bus conductress who said "I'm not religious, but I must have a cheerful bus." What does that suggest? That keeping your bus in good humour has nothing to do with religion? The booklet is a reply to that unspoken assumption, pointing to the value of real religious fellowship stimulated in and by the church, and strengthening the excellent "secular" morality that is very rightly concerned with keeping one's bus cheerful. What Unitarian churches are doing to help to solve the social and world problems of our day is briefly but clearly indicated. You will need a few copies to hand out before long !

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Northern Sunday School Federation
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